

ONE MAN CHURCH

Story Told of Illiterate Chinaman and Great Work.

In Fukien Province He Started a Christian Organization.

MADE HOME INTO CHURCH

Had His Own Ten Commandments—Good Ones.

Then Came Curious People—They Stayed to Pray.

Foochow, China, Jan. 15 (by mail).—How an illiterate Chinaman of Fukien province started a Christian church all by himself without the help or knowledge of missionaries or native preachers, was told in a letter from Mrs. Elizabeth F. Brewster, a Methodist Episcopal missionary at Ng-Sau.

This man was on a journey and being tired went into a church to sit down. He was impressed by what he heard and went again and again. He tried to persuade his friends to go, but they scoffed at any good thing coming from "outside countries."

At length he decided to make his home, which had been in the family a long time and so was sacred by Chinese standards, into a church. To carry out the transformation he planned to put out a sign "Heaven Doctrine Hall" over the front door and a tablet with the Ten Commandments on the wall behind where the pulpit was supposed to be.

Hired Commandments Written. But he was in a quandary for he could not write. He finally went to the village writer and hired him to write out the Ten Commandments. His abbreviated version, as he dictated it to the letter writer, was as follows:

- I. One God.
- II. Don't use mud and wood to make gods.
- III. Don't use God's name lightly.
- IV. Six days work, one day rest.
- V. Honor your parents.
- VI. Don't kill.
- VII. Don't commit adultery.
- VIII. Don't steal.
- IX. Don't bear false witness.
- X. Don't covet.

Then His First Sermon. With everything now in order, he went back to the church where he had seen the light for the first time and then came home and held a service in his own church.

The people of the neighborhood were curious. They crowded in to see what this man could say. His stock of Christian lore was limited. But he made up for this in fervor. He repeated and repeated until he had heard in picturesquely flowery style.

And it took. Converts began to grow in number. In a few weeks he had a congregation.

Only then did the demand for a trained preacher arise. The congregation gathered and got up a petition on a piece of red paper. Then they went in a body to visit the American Methodist missionary, W. N. Brewster, recently deceased. They crowded into his office and put the petition in his hand.

"The people of O-Ka-Da village petition you and the great Methodist church to send us a preacher to lead us in the way of life," it read.

Then Came the Story. They told the story of the house that had become a church. The missionary and a native preacher decided to visit it. When they reached the Chinese preacher was shocked at the sight of the abbreviated ten commandments and was about to rebuke the man for mutilating the sacred word. But the American, with a suspicion of a tear in his eye but a look of great joy in his face, checked him.

"We will send you a preacher," he told the petitioners. "It is to aid in just such cases as this that the Methodist Episcopal church in America organized its missionary centenary to raise \$120,000,000. We will help you in every way we can."

TEETH

For First Class comparatively Painless Dentistry, at the Most Reasonable Prices, consult

PAINLESS ROMINE

734 KANS. AVE.
Topeka, K n

The present war, or high cost of living, has not caused him to raise his prices. You can afford to travel miles to patronize him, and save money. ALL DENTAL WORK GUARANTEED. Office hours, 8 to 6. Sunday, 10 to 12. Phone 2786. Lady Attendant.

W. A. BLAIR
MERCHANT POLICE
Residence 800 West Eighth
Phone 2764 Black

DR. GEO. PORT ASHTON
Dentist
N. W. Cor. 8th and Kansas Ave.
Phone 235

Business Builders
Engraving, Stationery and Fine Enchings for Promotion Catalogs and Circulars

Designs for Letterheads and Checks
Maps and Plans

CAPPER-ENGRAVING-CO
CAPPER BUILDING - TOPEKA

The Mysterious Ways of

WANG FOO

By Sidney C. Partridge

(Copyright, 1918, by The McClure Newspaper Syndicate.)

THE PEACOCK SCREEN

YOU may rest assured, Mr. Consul, that this department will do everything in its power to unravel the mystery and to discover the thief. This is the third time that the store has been broken into, for you see, they carry a very attractive line of goods, but in the other cases we traced the men and caught them before they left the Colony."

The foregoing remarks were addressed by Inspector Wallace of the Hong Kong police force, to the Hon. Mr. Masuda, Consul for Japan, as the latter was about to leave the Inspector's private office. He had been to interview him on the subject of a burglary a few nights before, in the establishment of one of his countrymen. This was the well-known firm of Takimoto & Co., dealers in curios and Japanese works of art, whose sawn woodwork was almost entirely the main entrance to the Hong Kong Hotel, and whose store was a rendezvous for tourists and treasure hunters of every kind.

"Thank you," replied the official from Tokyo. "I am sure you will. You know that Mr. Takimoto is one of our most respected residents in the Colony, and he and his friends feel this loss very keenly. What especially worries him is that there was not only the theft of a very valuable work of art, but it was accompanied with wanton destruction of property, as if some one was trying to do him a personal injury."

"If there is anything of that kind in it, we will be sure to find it out, Sir, but I am quite sure it could not have been an agent of any of the other curio dealers in Queen's Road, for they are our finest Chinese citizens. It would only be some cheap shop-keeper down on the waterfront front who would descend to that."

"These international jealousies are pretty strong, sometimes, Mr. Inspector."

"Yes, I know they are, but I am sure the standing of your firm is too high for that, Sir. Messrs. Takimoto & Co. are very popular with their Chinese neighbors and subscribe liberally to all their charities. It must be just a case of simple villainy—the thief may have been frightened away or something else may have occurred to anger him so he just took his spite out on the first thing he came across; I've often had them do it."

"I hope it is nothing more. Good morning, Sir."

"Good morning, Mr. Consul, and tell Mr. Takimoto that we are just as much interested in this as he is and that I have put my very best men to work on the case. We are sure to hear something in a day or two."

The Japanese visitor stepped into his waiting jink-sha and was whirled away in the direction of his Consulate.

"Brownlow," said the Chief to his Assistant, as they resumed their seats in the office, "our friend from Tokyo seems quite worked up about this case."

"Yes, Sir, they feel very sensitive about anything happening to one of their countrymen, especially in a port like this. But, as I said to Mr. Takimoto's head clerk, 'there's nothing personal in this at all—it's just plain out-and-out robbery, that's all, and it might have happened to any English firm just the same as to yours.'"

"Have you put the native officers to work on the pawn-shops?"

"Yes, Sir, we're having a thorough clean-up of the whole lot."

"Then have all the European hotels warned to look out for curio dealers and peddlers trying to sell to tourists, and have an officer at the gang-way of every steamer to catch them if they try to get on board. It's almost sure to go to one of those two places, you know."

"As you say, Sir," replied the faithful Brownlow.

Mrs. Walter Weatherstone, wife of the head of the firm of Weatherstone & Co., Australian merchants, was very proud of her drawing-room and of her wonderful collection of art and curios which adorned it. She had been gathering them here and there for a number of years and now she felt quite sure that there was really nothing finer in the Colony even in Shanghai.

Indeed, this was the tribute which admiring friends and visitors paid, who were her guests at teas and receptions at which she presided with the grace of a veritable Oriental queen. Needless to say, she was one of Messrs. Takimoto & Co.'s best customers and they had a standing order to notify her when any new and very attractive article was to be offered for sale. Just at this time they had put on exhibition a superb piece of Japanese embroidery, and Mrs. Weatherstone had already cast envious eyes upon it as a center-piece for the drawing-room. It was a screen, set in a highly carved frame of lacquer and measuring some five feet in height and four in width.

The figure was a peacock with outspread tail and the handiwork was by Nishimura's finest artists. Four men had worked on it, and it was over three years and so delicate and so perfect was the needle-work that the creature seemed to stand right out from the screen and every individual feather to be quivering with motion. Nothing approaching it in beauty had ever been seen in Hong Kong—but the price! Ah, that was what made it the richest resident and the most valuable tourist memento for the figures in Mexican dollars ran up into the thousands!

"My dear Mrs. Atherton," said our hostess to her old friend who had just arrived on the mail steamer from Sydney, "you must come down with me to Takimoto's tomorrow and see that perfectly exquisite peacock screen. I am just hesitating about it for my

drawing-room and I should love to have you tell me what you think of it. Now do come—and bring both the daughters with you, I have an appointment with them to show it to us last night. You see, I am making it early, because the American mail arrives in the afternoon and I should feel dreadful to have some rich traveler from the States take it away from me."

As the town clock began striking the noon hour on the following day, the four ladies were ushered into the reception room of Messrs. Takimoto & Co., where the head of the firm was waiting to receive them. The screen was placed on a raised platform between two windows, where the best light for viewing it could be obtained, and when the ladies were duly seated, the manager motioned to his two Japanese assistants to uncover it. It had been carefully concealed beneath a heavy curtain of yellow silk, which served not only to exclude the dust, but also to protect the delicate handiwork from the strong rays of the sun.

The clerks stepped forward and standing, one on the right side and one on the left, proceeded to lift the curtain with all the solemn impressiveness of a pair of Cathedral vergers unveiling a masterpiece of Raphael's. They had hardly raised it a foot when the ladies simultaneously cried out: "Why! Something has happened to it!" and almost in the same breath: "It is gone!"

Yes, it was most certainly gone—not unscratched from the frame or carefully removed, but evidently slashed out with a very sharp knife as a European thief often cuts a valuable canvas from the wall. It had been done during the night and evidently done hastily and with poor light, as evidenced by the ragged edges of the silk and the scratches made by the knife on the lacquered frame. Yet the thief had stopped long enough—wishing to postpone the hour of detection—to replace the curtain of yellow silk and even to tie together again the knotted cords and tassels that held it in place.

"Who could have done such an awful thing," Mr. Takimoto inquired of the ladies, as soon as their composure was recovered enough for them to speak.

"Some robber, I suppose, who hopes to sell it to a tourist," he answered.

"No native would steal it for himself."

"And is there no chance of recovering it?"

"Well, we have an excellent police service here, and I am sure they will do all they can to find it before it is smuggled out of the Colony."

"You must be sure and let us know if they get it, won't you? We admired it so much that we almost feel the loss is ours as well as yours."

"Ladies, I thank you. I thank you a thousand times!" replied the manager, bowing his customers to the door with all the grace of a Samurai of Old Japan.

The case was at once reported to the authorities and Captain Brownlow had responded in person and gone into the matter most thoroughly, before the interview at the beginning of our chapter between the Japanese Consul and the Chief Inspector.

More than a week passed by, but no trace of the missing peacock. The police at all the ports from Singapore to Tien-Tsin had been wired to and the Japanese themselves had notified their own officers, but it had vanished completely from sight. The firm of Takimoto & Co. had received no end of personal visits and letters from sympathetic friends in the Colony, all of whom seemed to feel it a direct reflection upon them that such a valuable work of art should have been stolen from their midst. Among the callers, none were more outspoken in their regrets than the Chinese merchants of Queen's Road, many of whom were prominent in the same line of business. One of these, Mr. Loong Foy, of the establishment of Wan Cheng & Co. ("Myriad Perfections," importers and exporters of curios, finally took it upon himself to present his plea to the Police Department in person. He waited upon the Inspector the following day.

"Mr. Wal-la-see, we all too much shame-face this side," he began, "cause thief man come my store steal five thousand dollar, how fashion?"

"Well, Mr. Loong," replied the Chief, as he ordered the office boy at once to bring the tea and pipes for his visitor, "while this is a serious loss for Mr. Takimoto, it must be exceedingly gratifying to him and his friends to know how high he stands in the community and how much you feel for him."

"How you think, Mr. Wal-la-see, can cathee tat thief man? My friend, Chinese Mandan, talkee my no can save, 'cause 'longee fashion steal, no cathee, 'cause 'longee fashion steal."

"It is hard to say who took it. It may have been a foreign sailor—they sometimes steal curios and valuable stuff and carry it on board the mail steamers to sell to the passengers when they get out to sea—but I think it much more likely to have been a native thief in league with some of those hotel runners."

"With pleasure," replied his host, and, rising from their seats, they followed him about the room while every door and window and screen was carefully examined.

"Has there been any change whatever in the furniture of the room since that night?" he asked.

"None at all—everything stands now exactly where it did then."

He took his stand in the center of the room and carefully surveyed its contents.

"Every door and window has European locks and hinges, has it not? There are no Japanese screens or sliding panels?"

same China joss, can see night-side, can save what side thief man go, velly good."

With this complimentary comparison of the Chinese Detective to a native divinity, Mr. Loong bowed his way out from the Inspector's office and returned to the house of "Myriad Perfections" in time for the afternoon rice. Four days later Wang Foy, Captain Brownlow and Mr. Takimoto met by appointment in the latter's private reception room, from which the precious piece of Japanese embroidery had been so ruthlessly stolen. A fair little maid in silken kimono and brocade sash stepped softly into the room and placing upon the center table of cherry-wood the little tray with its tea-pot and tiny bowls, the saucer with the crisp semboi or rice-cakes and the box of barley sugar paste, disappeared as silently as she had entered. After the guests had refreshed themselves and aced the delicate clean an after-dinner scream of an angel, the three stepped forward and standing, one on the right side and one on the left, proceeded to lift the curtain with all the solemn impressiveness of a pair of Cathedral vergers unveiling a masterpiece of Raphael's. They had hardly raised it a foot when the ladies simultaneously cried out: "Why! Something has happened to it!" and almost in the same breath: "It is gone!"

Yes, it was most certainly gone—not unscratched from the frame or carefully removed, but evidently slashed out with a very sharp knife as a European thief often cuts a valuable canvas from the wall. It had been done during the night and evidently done hastily and with poor light, as evidenced by the ragged edges of the silk and the scratches made by the knife on the lacquered frame. Yet the thief had stopped long enough—wishing to postpone the hour of detection—to replace the curtain of yellow silk and even to tie together again the knotted cords and tassels that held it in place.

"Who could have done such an awful thing," Mr. Takimoto inquired of the ladies, as soon as their composure was recovered enough for them to speak.

"Some robber, I suppose, who hopes to sell it to a tourist," he answered.

"No native would steal it for himself."

"And is there no chance of recovering it?"

"Well, we have an excellent police service here, and I am sure they will do all they can to find it before it is smuggled out of the Colony."

"You must be sure and let us know if they get it, won't you? We admired it so much that we almost feel the loss is ours as well as yours."

"Ladies, I thank you. I thank you a thousand times!" replied the manager, bowing his customers to the door with all the grace of a Samurai of Old Japan.

The case was at once reported to the authorities and Captain Brownlow had responded in person and gone into the matter most thoroughly, before the interview at the beginning of our chapter between the Japanese Consul and the Chief Inspector.

More than a week passed by, but no trace of the missing peacock. The police at all the ports from Singapore to Tien-Tsin had been wired to and the Japanese themselves had notified their own officers, but it had vanished completely from sight. The firm of Takimoto & Co. had received no end of personal visits and letters from sympathetic friends in the Colony, all of whom seemed to feel it a direct reflection upon them that such a valuable work of art should have been stolen from their midst. Among the callers, none were more outspoken in their regrets than the Chinese merchants of Queen's Road, many of whom were prominent in the same line of business. One of these, Mr. Loong Foy, of the establishment of Wan Cheng & Co. ("Myriad Perfections," importers and exporters of curios, finally took it upon himself to present his plea to the Police Department in person. He waited upon the Inspector the following day.

"Mr. Wal-la-see, we all too much shame-face this side," he began, "cause thief man come my store steal five thousand dollar, how fashion?"

"Well, Mr. Loong," replied the Chief, as he ordered the office boy at once to bring the tea and pipes for his visitor, "while this is a serious loss for Mr. Takimoto, it must be exceedingly gratifying to him and his friends to know how high he stands in the community and how much you feel for him."

"How you think, Mr. Wal-la-see, can cathee tat thief man? My friend, Chinese Mandan, talkee my no can save, 'cause 'longee fashion steal, no cathee, 'cause 'longee fashion steal."

"It is hard to say who took it. It may have been a foreign sailor—they sometimes steal curios and valuable stuff and carry it on board the mail steamers to sell to the passengers when they get out to sea—but I think it much more likely to have been a native thief in league with some of those hotel runners."

"With pleasure," replied his host, and, rising from their seats, they followed him about the room while every door and window and screen was carefully examined.

"Has there been any change whatever in the furniture of the room since that night?" he asked.

"None at all—everything stands now exactly where it did then."

He took his stand in the center of the room and carefully surveyed its contents.

"Every door and window has European locks and hinges, has it not? There are no Japanese screens or sliding panels?"

"Yes, Sir, everything is absolutely secure, and the room is locked and bolted every night. No one but myself holds the keys."

"The queer cabinet is almost large enough for a man to conceal himself behind it, is it not?"

"Well, a small sized person might possibly squeeze in between it and the wall."

"Who cleans and dusts the room?"

"Old Deaf Lee the coolie is the only servant allowed to enter here, and I go over it after him every time."

"Is this old servant really deaf?"

"Quite deaf, Sir; that's the reason they gave him the name."

"Please send for him."

The coolie was promptly summoned and put through a rigid examination in his native tongue while the two guests stood and tried to gather what they could from his gestures, for the language was entirely beyond them.

"That is all, Gentlemen, and now I must ask the privilege of a few days' leave to give this matter the thought and attention that it deserves."

This closed the interview and, bidding them good-bye, Wang Foy sauntered out into the highway and walked leisurely in the direction of the Avenue of Fragrant Waters. Reaching his home, he said to the Venerable Grand One: "I want a quiet afternoon and evening—bid any guests return upon the morrow."

"It is done as the Master says," replied the aged attendant, as she carefully bolted the outer gate and went to prepare the tea. He ascended the steep steps into the upper room, and when the boiling tea and fragrant pipe appeared, he removed his silken jacket and sat down to ponder over what he

noise and confusion reigned supreme as the soldiers on board attempted to force a passage for her to the steamer. When she finally was made fast, a long line of servants and retainers clambered on the gangway, clearing the way for two high officers of state who had come to pay their respects to the great departed one. They were Chang the Fan-Tai (or Treasurer General) and Woo the Tao-Tai (or Intendant of the Circuit). They were of equal noble rank, so, in addition to the embroidered ceremonial robes and disks, each wore the three-eyed peacock feather in his hat, one with the knob of blue crystal and the other with the knob of red coral. More than two hours were taken up with the elaborate ritual prescribed in the Book of Rites and Ceremony and they were escorted back to their junk with profound bows and expressions of gratitude on the part of the Vice-regal mourners. Once safely back in their little cabin, they both breathed long sighs of relief and proceeded to exchange the uncomfortable uniforms for the easy garments of every day life.

"Well, we got safely through it," exclaimed Chang.

"The luckiest escape of our lives," answered Woo.

Just why it was called "a lucky escape" will appear from the following incident, and thereby hangs a tale.

Two nights before, while they were bringing some baggage aboard the junk, a careless boat-man had slipped and dropped a circular oil-skin case into the water and in spite of frantic efforts to save it, it sank before his eyes. It contained the official hats and decorations—the most important part of their regalia. When it became known, the officials were furious. They ordered the soldiers to seize the boat-man and beat him there and then. He fell upon his knees and shrieked for mercy, but all his cries were useless.

"But the feathers, the peacock feathers with three eyes," exclaimed the lad, "these are the most important things of all; where can I get them?"

"Think not of the decree of heaven, but think of the decree of the Emperor," said the other. "There doubtless was the saddest answer."

The Bird of Confucius wears them only for those of noble rank. But buy the hats and try the fortune teller's words, to find a substitute."

So, knowing what he did, he laid the price upon the counter and departed with the carefully wrapped bundle in his arms. He passed down the Dragon Alley and walked rapidly along Queen's Road till he came to the narrow passage-way that separated the house of Takimoto & Co. from the adjoining establishment.

He paused and hesitated for a moment then said to himself: "I will go and see my Uncle Lee, who lives a few doors above, and beg him to advise me."

He found the door, opened it and climbed the rickety stairs to the humble abode of him who was known as "Deaf Lee, the coolie."

What they there said and did, and what the uncle planned to save his brother's life, had better be told by Wang Foy himself, the unraveller of the mystery.

"A very clever capture, Mr. Wang," said Inspector Wallace to the Hong Kong man of mystery, when, a few days later, they met by appointment at the scene of the now famous robbery.

"But," he added with pardonable pride, "it took only just to the Department to say that we have suspected Deaf Lee from the very beginning. He was questioned and questioned and his room has been thoroughly searched, but not a word of confession could we get out of him, nor could a trace of the missing embroidery be found. The detectives have shadowed him every moment since, but he has not gone to any place where he could dispose of it. And then, Mr. Takimoto had such confidence in him and trusted the old deaf creature so implicitly that it rather threw us off the trail. Would you mind telling us what led you to fix it so quickly upon him?"

"Well, after a careful study of the apartment, I felt very sure that it had not been broken into from without and so my conclusion was, very naturally, that it had been stolen from within."

The next question was, how could Mr. Takimoto saw the screen covered himself late in the afternoon, and when it was opened at noon the next day, it was gone; the theft must clearly have taken place during the night or early in the morning. Now," he said, very slowly, as he slipped his cup of Japanese tea, "we come to the important question of the man. No one was in that room before these hours—that the proprietor had it securely locked—except Deaf Lee, and he was only there for some fifteen minutes or so, dusting it out at the close of the day. He must have watched his master closely and, taking advantage of temporary absence, have slashed out the peacock under his gown and rapidly replaced the covering and tied the heavy cords to the frame from which the ragged edges of the silk were still hanging, he turned it completely around and calling their attention to a fragment of white paper which he had cut out in half, he pointed his tapering index finger at it and said: 'Gentlemen, this paper, which was merely a small label pasted on the back of the screen, contains the facts about the peacock. They

metal which the Chinese boat-women wear instead of putting their savings in the bank. She worked it off her ankle with difficulty and pain and handed it to him all her worldly wealth. 'Where are you going now?' she asked."

"To consult Old Lang the fortune-teller at the Temple of the Queen of Heaven."

"Go! And may the lucky stars guide thee on thy way!"

Old Lang sat at his little table in the temple court when Wan Seng arrived. It had been a busy day with him and more than twenty customers had learned from him the decrees of fate and received advice on matters of personal importance. They waited till a quiet moment and then the boat-man's son told the story of the accident, of the seizure of his father and of the frantic efforts they were making to save his life. The seer turned over the pages of a musty volume that lay before him, made some mystic symbols on talismans and raising up an urn containing slugs of carved bamboo shook them solemnly in the air as he bowed thrice towards the shrine of the Queen.

One slip fell out and lay upon the table. He picked it up and deciphered the characters upon it. "Imperial decree," he said. He repeated the words over slowly, "Imperial effort"—and, playing upon the similarity of sounds, added, "Substitute work." He turned to a slip of yellow paper and wrote upon it a slip of yellow paper and the fates decreed that every effort must be made to find a substitute."

He accepted the proffered fee and said: "Go, Tak-boy, the hat-maker of the Dragon Alley and tell him to have the two hats ready by the morrow."

The little shop of Tak Foy carried only a very limited stock, so after a thorough search along his dusty shelves and in the various boxes and trunks which stood about the room, he found two official hats of the rank in question and these he agreed to sell to his customer for five and twenty Mexican dollars.

"But the feathers, the peacock feathers with three eyes," exclaimed the lad, "these are the most important things of all; where can I get them?"

"Think not of the decree of heaven, but think of the decree of the Emperor," said the other. "There doubtless was the saddest answer."

The Bird of Confucius wears them only for those of noble rank. But buy the hats and try the fortune teller's words, to find a substitute."

So, knowing what he did, he laid the price upon the counter and departed with the carefully wrapped bundle in his arms. He passed down the Dragon Alley and walked rapidly along Queen's Road till he came to the narrow passage-way that separated the house of Takimoto & Co. from the adjoining establishment.

He paused and hesitated for a moment then said to himself: "I will go and see my Uncle Lee, who lives a few doors above, and beg him to advise me."

He found the door, opened it and climbed the rickety stairs to the humble abode of him who was known as "Deaf Lee, the coolie."

What they there said and did, and what the uncle planned to save his brother's life, had better be told by Wang Foy himself, the unraveller of the mystery.

"A very clever capture, Mr. Wang," said Inspector Wallace to the Hong Kong man of mystery, when, a few days later, they met by appointment at the scene of the now famous robbery.

"But," he added with pardonable pride, "it took only just to the Department to say that we have suspected Deaf Lee from the very beginning. He was questioned and questioned and his room has been thoroughly searched, but not a word of confession could we get out of him, nor could a trace of the missing embroidery be found. The detectives have shadowed him every moment since, but he has not gone to any place where he could dispose of it. And then, Mr. Takimoto had such confidence in him and trusted the old deaf creature so implicitly that it rather threw us off the trail. Would you mind telling us what led you to fix it so quickly upon him?"

"Well, after a careful study of the apartment, I felt very sure that it had not been broken into from without and so my conclusion was, very naturally, that it had been stolen from within."

The next question was, how could Mr. Takimoto saw the screen covered himself late in the afternoon, and when it was opened at noon the next day, it was gone; the theft must clearly have taken place during the night or early in the morning. Now," he said, very slowly, as he slipped his cup of Japanese tea, "we come to the important question of the man. No one was in that room before these hours—that the proprietor had it securely locked—except Deaf Lee, and he was only there for some fifteen minutes or so, dusting it out at the close of the day. He must have watched his master closely and, taking advantage of temporary absence, have slashed out the peacock under his gown and rapidly replaced the covering and tied the heavy cords to the frame from which the ragged edges of the silk were still hanging, he turned it completely around and calling their attention to a fragment of white paper which he had cut out in half, he pointed his tapering index finger at it and said: 'Gentlemen, this paper, which was merely a small label pasted on the back of the screen, contains the facts about the peacock. They

are 'Con Chok,' the 'Bird of Confucius.' That first symbol is the family name of the great Sage, sacred beyond words to every son of the Celestial Empire. To tear that word, to step on it, to desecrate it in any way, is an insult to the gods of literature, but to plunge a knife through it, as the thief in his hurry did, is to bring down upon him and all his family the vengeance of high Heaven. When I charged him with it yesterday, he fell faintest on the stone floor of his cell! But to continue my story, Gentlemen, when I made my first examination of the name from which the embroidery had been cut, I discovered that the thief in his hurry had cut into the head and neck of the bird,